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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000763

FOR INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA: CROWN PRINCE'S FAMILY ALLIES

REF: 95 RIYADH 5297

11. (U) CLASSIFIED BY DCM THEODORE KATTOUF: 1.5 B.

SUMMARY

12. (C) SPECULATION THAT THE CROWN PRINCE ANGRILY DEPARTED FOR HAFR AL-BATIN FOLLOWING KING FAHD'S RESUMPTION OF FULL GOVERNING POWERS ON FEBRUARY 21 IS DISMISSED BY SOURCES WITHIN THE SAUDI ARABIA NATIONAL GUARD AND AMONG ABDULLAH'S ADVISERS. NONETHELESS, THE NUMBER OF SENIOR PRINCES WHO ACCOMPANIED THE CROWN PRINCE ON HIS FAMILY CAMPING TRIP ILLUSTRATES THE POLITICAL ALLIANCES WHICH ABDULLAH HAS CULTIVATED TO OFFSET THE DOMINATION OF THE NUMEROUS AND POWERFULLY POSITIONED SUDAYRI BROTHERS. THE FAMILY ENCLAVE DEMONSTRATES PUBLICLY ABDULLAH'S STRONG BASE AMONG THE SURVIVING SONS OF KING ABD AL-AZIZ. END SUMMARY

ABDULLAH PITCHES TENT IN HAFR AL-BATIN

13. (C) ON FEBRUARY 22, THE DAY AFTER FAHD UNEXPECTEDLY RESUMED FULL GOVERNING POWERS WHICH ENDED THE CROWN PRINCE'S TWO MONTH REGENCY, ABDULLAH DEPARTED RIYADH FOR AN OPULENT FAMILY CAMPING TRIP IN THE NORTH-EASTERN CORNER OF THE KINGDOM, AT HAFR AL-BATIN. SOURCES WITHIN THE SAUDI ARABIA NATIONAL GUARD DISMISS RUMORS THAT ABDULLAH LEFT IN A HUFF, NOTING THAT SUCH A DESERT OUTING IS NORMAL FOR THE CROWN PRINCE, BUT HAD BEEN DELAYED WHILE HE FILLED IN FOR FAHD. ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE CROWN PRINCE'S ADVISERS, ABDULLAH DEPARTED QUICKLY FOR HAFR AL-BATIN SINCE HIS PRESENCE IN THE CAPITAL IS REQUIRED PRIOR TO THE START OF THE ANNUAL SANG-SPONSORED CULTURAL FESTIVAL, JANADRIYYAH, SLATED TO BEGIN MARCH 7.

14. (C) SOME ROYAL OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT ABDULLAH'S RETREAT TO HAFR IS A REFLECTION OF THE KING'S SATISFACTION WITH THE CP'S GOVERNING PERFORMANCE SINCE THE ROYAL CAMP SITE IS TRADITIONALLY THE PRESERVE OF FAHD AND HIS INTIMATES. ONLY TRUSTED AIDES, CLOSE ADVISERS, AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS ACCOMPANY THE KING ON HIS TRIPS TO HAFR, A SITE WHICH HAS BEEN USED TO FETE BOTH PRESIDENT CLINTON AND FORMER SECSTATE SHULTZ. LENDING WEIGHT TO THIS INTERPRETATION IS THE FACT THAT WHEN THE CROWN PRINCE HAS SOUGHT TO COMMUNICATE HIS DISPLEASURE WITH ROYAL DECISIONS IN THE PAST, HE HAS FLOWN OFF TO MOROCCO, NOT TO THE KINGDOM'S BEDOUIN INTERIOR.

AND TAKES ALONG HIS COTERIE OF ROYAL SUPPORTERS

15. (C) THE FAMILY CONSTELLATION WHICH ACCOMPANIED ABDULLAH ON HIS POST-REGENCY RETREAT REPRESENTS AN INTRIGUING SNAP-SHOT OF WHOM, AMONG THE MORE SENIOR ROYAL FAMILY MEMBERS, SHARES A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CROWN PRINCE. THE CAMPERS INCLUDED:

O HALF-BROTHERS:

THE STANDARD COTERIE OF NON-SUDAYRI HALF-BROTHERS IS PRESENT IN HAFR, INCLUDING: DEPUTY SANG COMMANDER, BADR BIN ABD AL-AZIZ; HAIL GOVERNOR MUQRIN BIN ABD AL-AZIZ; MEDINA GOVERNOR ABD AL-MAJID BIN ABD AL-AZIZ; FORMER QASIM GOVERNOR, ABD AL-ILAH BIN ABD AL-AZIZ; FORMER MECCA GOVERNOR, FAWWAZ BIN ABD AL-AZIZ; AND NAWWAF BIN ABD AL-AZIZ. (COMMENT: TO THIS GROUP, WE WOULD ADD FORMER TABUK GOVERNOR, MAMDUH BIN ABD AL-AZIZ, WHO, WHILE ABSENT FROM HAFR, TYPICALLY ACCOMPANIES THE CROWN PRINCE AND IS A REGULAR AT ABDULLAH'S EVENING FAMILY MAJLIS. SIMILARLY, BANDAR AND MISH'AL BIN ABD AL-AZIZ, PASSED OVER IN THE LINE OF SUCCESSION, ARE ALSO CONSIDERED NATURAL SUPPORTERS OF THE CROWN PRINCE. MISH'AL TRAVELLED WITH THE CROWN PRINCE TO QASIM FOR THE SANG'S NOVEMBER 1995 TRAINING EXERCISE (REFTTEL), WHERE ABDULLAH WAS HOSTED BY BANDAR'S SON, QASIM GOVERNOR FAYSAL BIN BANDAR.) IN ALL, SEVEN OF THE EIGHTEEN SURVIVING, NON-SUDAYRI SONS OF KING ABD AL-AZIZ TRAVELLED TO HAFR.

O SONS:

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KHALID BIN ABDULLAH, WHO WAS DISMISSED FROM THE SANG FOLLOWING POLICY DISAGREEMENTS WITH HIS FATHER'S ADVISERS, ALL OF ABDULLAH'S NINE SONS ARE PRESENT IN HAFR AL-BATIN. TWO SONS, NOT PREVIOUSLY RECORDED IN OUR ROYAL FAMILY GENEALOGY, ARE LISTED: MUHAMMAD AND MAJID. (NOTE: THE LATTER MAY INCLUDE ABDULLAH'S ONE YEAR OLD SON WHO, ACCORDING TO THE CP'S PERSONAL PHYSICIAN, IS A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE, COMING AS HE DID AFTER A LONG STREAK OF DAUGHTERS.)

O YOUNGER GENERATION:

IN ADDITION TO PRINCE TURKI BIN ABDULLAH BIN MUHAMMAD BIN SAUD AL KABIR, THE ADVISER CUM PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE CROWN PRINCE, ANOTHER GROUP OF THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION PRINCES PRESENT IN HAFR MAY BE ABDULLAH'S SON-IN-LAWS. ONE WHOM WE CAN POSITIVELY IDENTIFY AS A SON-IN-LAW (AND FELLOW EQUESTRIAN ENTHUSIAST) IS THE SANG WESTERN COMMANDER WHO REPLACED KHALID BIN ABDULLAH -- HRH PRINCE FAYSAL BIN ABDULLAH BIN MUHAMMAD AL SAUD. WE ARE NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRINCE FAYSAL BIN THAMIR BIN ABD AL-AZIZ (THE SOLE OFF-SPRING OF THAMIR, WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE IN THE U.S. IN 1957 FOLLOWING A SEX CHANGE OPERATION) AND PRINCE KHALID BIN BANDAR BIN MUHAMMAD BIN ABD AL-AZIZ.

COMMENT

16. (C) ABDULLAH'S ENTOURAGE ILLUSTRATES THE ALLIANCES HE HAS FORMED WITHIN THE ROYAL FAMILY AMONG BROTHERS WHOSE SENIORITY, IN TERMS OF AGE, IS NOT MATCHED BY PREMIER GOVERNMENT POSTINGS. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE CROWN PRINCE'S FAMILY SUPPORTERS SHARE THE SAME POLICY OBJECTIVES, IT IS CLEARLY IN THE PERSONAL POLITICAL INTERESTS OF THESE PRINCELY "HAVE-NOTS," DISADVANTAGED BY NON-SAUDI MATERNAL LINEAGE OR A POOR RECORD IN GOVERNMENT OFFICE, TO BAND TOGETHER AGAINST THE TIDE OF SUDAYRI BROTHERS, NUMERICALLY RICH AND POWERFULLY POSITIONED. AT THE SAME TIME, THEIR INCLUSION IN ABDULLAH'S VACATION RETREAT REINFORCES IN THE PUBLIC MIND THAT WHILE THE CROWN PRINCE MAY BE AN ONLY (MATERNAL) CHILD, HIS FAMILY BACKING AMONG THE SURVIVING SONS OF ABD AL-AZIZ IS SECURE.

MABUS